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THE
WARNING OF WAR:

A POEM

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
UNITED SOCIETIES OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE
HANOVER, N. H.

AT THE ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, JULY 30, 1862,

BY
CHARLES T. CONGDON.

"— GOD'S MOST DREADED INSTRUMENT,
IN WORKING OUT A PURE INTENT,
IS MAN ARRAYED FOR MUTUAL SLAUGHTER:
YEA, CARNAGE IS HIS DAUGHTER."—Wordsworth



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1862.

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To

SIDNEY HOWARD GAY, Esq.

of New-York.

Receive, dear Gay, these rude but direct rhymes—

Or all is good in them, a debt, receive,
As what your pen has taught me to believe.

Or friendly converse in these hostile times!

Our sky is dark and blood-red; and the hour

Full of God's wrath: yet if some small delight

Remain of happier days, 'tis yours of right.

Who have not learned in all your life to cover.

Yours is the sorrow; yours is not the shame,

Whose eye oscilluous finger has not failed

So many years to point to our ill fame,

And coming retribution; now assailed

Our peace, no heart than yours will warmer yearn,

If but our wrong's removed, to mark our peace return!

THE WARNING OF WAR.

THE times need action, and the day demands
The stern evangel not of hearts, but hands;
Or haply asks, to feed its martial fire,
The ringing slogans of some Spartan lyre.
We fly the field of ravage and of raid
To seek again this academic shade;
Here leave awhile, as trumpet-tumults cease,
The arts of war, to woo the arts of peace.
Ah, vain endeavor! e'en these cloistral aisles
The shout still deafens, and the drum defiles;
Still through these groves, with desecrating light,
Flash the long levins of the heady fight.
The pale-faced student, bending by his lamp,
Shuts up his book to dream of charge or camp,
To vow that virtue still shall guard his home
That serried Greece and knit the ranks of Rome.
Why turn these folios with assiduous hand?
Ah! what were learning if we had no land?
'T was she inspired; at her benign behest,
The patient toil—the long and devious quest!
Ah! what avails laborious pursuit,

If she no more exist to claim the fruit?
 Close these dull annals, food for scorn and wit!
 All history's worthless if her history's writ!
 Weep not for empires buried long ago:
 Reserve your requiems for this latter woe!
 We'll grow pedantic over modern times—
 The sour, sad scholiasts of our own great crimes!
 Vainly for us the historic beacon shines
 If we nurse Borgias here or Catilines.
 Builded our fathers that we might but add
 One warning more to all the world has had?
 Must we be false because our sires were true?
 Did they so deftly that we might undo?
 Is it by their great virtue that we claim
 Baseness exempt—immunity for shame?
 'T were better then that our tradition's page
 Had paled and crumbled at the touch of age—
 That those who follow us might never know
 We were so dowered, and were bankrupt so!

The times need action! 'round the soldier's name
 In stormy periods gathers triple fame.
 Brave thought must harden into deed as brave,
 Or stern endeavor, ere that thought can save.
 They serve who strike—they also serve who call!
 Yet words are but half-battles after all.
 'T is not for me, in my unstudied rhymes,
 To sing the epic of these stirring times.
 Yet, mid the misery of our hopes and fears,
 Our kindling rage, and bitter farewell tears;
 Our homes to which, while gentle heart-strings break,
 The lost come not the vacant seat to take—

Where with some gallant spirit's upward flight
 Love's roseate dreams have deepened into night;
 Where bend we sadly o'er his slumbering clay
 Whom factious rage has slaughtered in its play—
 Yes, o'er our brave ones locked in their last sleep—
 Serve they not truly who but watch and weep?
 O gentle mourners 'round the soldier's tomb,
 He walks in light, while you walk still in gloom!
 His be the laurel, his the marble piled;
 And yours—O what? O mother, wife, or child!
 Heaven keep our soldiers in their quiet graves.
 At home no trumpet sounds, no banner waves;
 There sit our mourners—silent sit, and wait;
 O cheer! kind Heaven, these hearth-stones desolate!
 See yonder field! the soldier falling there
 To win some trophy he shall never wear,
 His long, long days of patient waiting o'er,
 Shared but one onset—fate denied him more!
 No herald's trump will sound his deeds or name;
 No grateful voices greet him with acclaim;
 One of a thousand, to the shades he flies,
 Unnoticed dares, or half unnoticed dies;
 And all his pain and all his labor o'er,
 Divides his laurels with a myriad more.
 And this is battle! In the morning beam
 Gay trumpets sound and gorgeous banners stream;
 The charger's hoof, impatient for the start,
 Beats time responsive to the rider's heart.
 On to the battle! With one cheerful cry
 A thousand voices swear to do or die.
 The evening falls; and o'er the bloody plain,
 Where all was life, grim death asserts his reign.

In solemn awe above the scene we stand,
 The dead and dying strown on either hand,
 And ask what madmen urged this desperate fight?
 Who served for shame, and who die here for right?
 One answer makes the earth and one the sky:
 He dies for right who dares for land to die;
 And he strikes basely, heavy though his hand,
 Who smites the life and freedom of his land.

In quiet times, when men give thanks to Peace
 For even days and multiplied increase,
 When all so softly all our fortunes fall,
 Life's little burthens scarce are felt at all.
 'Midst gentle pleasures and pacific art
 The world may lose its high heroic heart;
 Perhaps displace, for virtue pure and bold,
 Slow cankering sloth or feverish thirst for gold;
 Written romances all our souls engage—
 The thin dilutions of some genuine age;
 And generous deeds are phantasies that glide
 Without a purpose down the centuries' tide;
 While we, dull souls, forget an antique race
 Makes its own epic, maugre time and place;
 Forget no earnest men in earnest days
 Turn work to sport, or politics to plays;
 Forget that souls are strengthened in the strife,
 And truth alone in all the world has life.
 Still we creep on; and day succeeds to day,
 And morn to night, with yet unclouded ray;
 Half steeped our souls in Sybaritic sleep,
 Like some gorged insect, through the flowers we creep;
 We eat our lotus upon Lethe's brink,

And, full of fancies, hardly deign to think.
 O idle dreamers, who so long have slept
 While mortal foes around your couches crept !
 O idle dreamers, that with eye half closed
 Have hoped, and doubted, and again have dozed ;
 And deemed that, trusting some fantastic lie,
 Some luck might save us, that we should not die !
 O idle dreamers, that against such shock
 Held up your creeds and crotchets orthodox —
 Say, did you laugh, or did you fall to tears,
 When burst the thunders on your frightened ears ?
 How show your makeshifts by this war's red light,
 Your patent schemes of turning wrong to right ?
 How felt you, taught in this far different school,
 That fact is fact, a fool is still a fool ?
 That truth, though bravely smeared, is truth, and hence
 No safety lies in syllogistic fence ?
 That life-in-death can never rise to life ?
 If war but teaches this, then welcome strife !

O man of mouldy comment ! you thought best
 Some axiom stale or theologic test ;
 You compensation found for every loss
 Of earnest truth, in some ingenious gloss ;
 And wondered why the nation had its cares
 While you at home assiduously split hairs.
 You proved that black was white, that cold was hot,
 And this and that—alas ! what proved you not ?
 That serfdom brightened freedom's holy flame ;
 That some must suffer now for Canaan's shame.
 You proved, by due comparison of polls,
 That facial angles argue fatuous souls ;

That God by outward types his will reveals—
 His love in short, his wrath in longer heels;
 That man might be an angel or a hog—
 Some born for flogging and some born to flog!
 You proved, good lack! at synod and at board,
 That truth brought peace and did not bring a sword;
 That christian faith, though cradled in a storm
 And born of protest, never must be warm!
 Must argue, weigh, collate, must hem and haw,
 And out of quids and quods construct its law.
 Sermons should soothe, and bring, in words to please,
 Great contentation and pacific ease!
 Amen! the fruit those sugary sermons bore:
 Half speech indeed—the other half a snore!
 Was waking rude? Yet only once again
 Men fondly slumbered but to wake to pain,—
 But once again are sternly, sharply taught
 Peace basely sought for is but strife unsought.
 The dear old quips in mouths of dear old shirks,
 Evasions hugged and well beloved quirks,
 Great solemn nothings, emptinesses sage,
 And sophistries respectable for age,
 At war's rude touch to cindery ashes fall!
 Mambrino's helm's a wash-bowl after all;
 The lance but punky touchwood, and alas!
 The rider Sancho and the steed an ass!
 Unhappy teachers that must thus be told
 What surely haps to things nor hot nor cold!
 No wonder men at last, though late, reject
 In wrath the trimming, tepidarean sect,
 And cry, in spite of decency and damns,
 O, give us anything but solemn shams;

O better bloodshed, better bankrupt blight,
 Than lackering wrong to make it seem like right!
 O better brigadiers in time of need
 Than Dr. Paleys run to dropping seed!
 Better war's life, than non-resistance run
 To non-existence, ere life's work is done!
 The doubt, the fear, the shivering delay,
 The base postponement of the reckoning day,
 May suit those souls that tremble on the brink
 Of action's tide, and fear to swim or sink;
 But he's a man half-hearted who'd abate
 One jot of faith in church alike with state,
 And life-in-death can never rise to life—
 If war but teaches this, then welcome strife!

O man of law! complacently you thought
 All statutes possible in Blackstone taught;
 Or squeezed between the covers calf of Coke
 All that man needs—and all things else a joke;
 You who have sworn no single inch to budge
 From where you're planted by some fine old judge;
 You who have stood prepared to bravely pit
 Six Latin phrases against human wit—
 Six formal precedents drawn up with art
 Against all promptings of the human heart;
 Who told us, hoarse and solemn as the daws,
 That Truth might lie, but Laws would still be Laws;
 Adored the virtues resident in rolls
 Although they took on execution souls;
 And claimed ability to re-create
 His choicest handiwork to real estate!
 Where now are those in whose defense you strove

Sometimes for lucre, sometimes but for love?
 Lords of God's image, and by fifty laws
 Alike the lords of acres and of squaws?
 Whips yield to swords; in closer ranks they draw —
 Defending what? why, what but sacred law?
 If tender-hearted mobs in some rash hour
 Dared when provoked to doubt a warrant's power,
 Or lifted up illegal hands to save
 Some panting wretch who fled a living grave,
 Ye gods, what howling! and, ye gods, what gloom!
 What dread foreboding of the crack of doom!
 What solemn warnings and what wild alarms,
 While all the streets were bristling with arms;
 While coward judges, spite of gaping flaws,
 Declared one odious law the law of laws!
 And where are they who in that sacred name
 Asked us to do the thing to do was shame?
 Asked us to save a nation in its need,
 Though cheeks should crimson, and though hearts should
 bleed?
 We heeded them: do they requite us thus?
 We stooped to them when law commanded us.
 They taught obedience sternly: where are they
 When self-same law implores them to obey?
 What warrant, save the signature of hell,
 Chartered these licensed sticklers to rebel?
 If law for us alike and them was made,
 Why law for us, for them the felon blade?
 Unhappy wretches we, who could not buy
 Peace at a price which good men thought too high!
 Proud patriots they who call their crime a cause:
 Base helots we, just fit to keep the laws!

They make, and we observe: we make, and they
Find that 'tis manlier then to disobey!

We reverence order, and we found the State
Right to secure and passion to abate;
We build our social ramparts—make them strong,
That selfish need may shrink from open wrong;
Each yields a part that each may bless the whole,
And lynx-eyed justice license still control.
We shrink from civil warfare's certain taint,
And own, what Nature owes the last—restraint!
But surely no philosophy extends
To scorn of vulgar means in quest of ends;
He's but a dubious teacher who, forsooth,
Can stoop to forty lies to fix one truth;
He tumbles back to ages coarse and rude
Who yields to forty ills to win one good;
He's a poor builder who, with fervent hands,
Raises—no matter what!—on quaking sands.
He toils, and hopes, and patches on—and then
Down falls the structure, sport for gods and men,
And leaves him, vexed and baffled, but to cry
It should have stood, and has not—Heaven knows why!
'Twas propped so nicely, and 'twas caulked so tight,
And that one weakness so well out of sight,
Might have remained so, all compact and stout,
But ill-conditioned knaves would find it out!
A bad thing in itself quite good—but lo!
Since men will talk about it, down we go!
As great our ruin as was great our pride,
In spite of plasters powerfully applied!
How strange to find, when all is said and done,

The rule of gravitation working on!
 How strange to find, as we inspect the flaw,
 That Nature never yet repealed a law!
 But spite of our "O bless us!" and "Good lack!"
 Quicksands are quicksands and a crack's a crack!
 Ah! if from all that now disturbs our rest
 Words could have saved us, had we not been blest!
 Piled we in vain, our coming fate to balk,
 These sheafs of daily, hourly printed talk —
 The dull report of speeches dull at first,
 In hearing bad, in type and record worst —
 The drivelling dribble of the tongue that speaks
 By rule one hour, but could go on for weeks,
 What rules, what orders, fairly can restrain
 Great choirs of spouters spouting one refrain?
 Though noisy dull, though wordy void of sense,
 With nothing genuine in them but pretense!
 Then, could not ward us from these sorrows all
 The dull epistles of the illustrious small —
 Brimful of warning, which we did not heed
 Because our faculties refused to read.
 Then, in long columns, now with kick, now hint,
 How many a sage has prophesied in print!
 And while the whirlwind hourly wilder grew,
 Went on, and wondered why the storm still blew!
 Alas! the sturdy demon would not sleep
 For all these charms, however dull and deep!
 Till now, above the nation's wide-spread woe,
 We hear his mocking laugh, and cower below!
 Till now we find the evil days have come
 When science fails and subterfuge is dumb!
 The bird of freedom marks with many a shriek

This moulting-time of her pretenses weak,
 And finding now no virtue in a text,
 In trembling wonder waits for what may happen next!
 Who knows? The knot that kingly hands defied
 Was cut at last, but could not be untied.
 Sometimes the body of the commonweal
 Is cancered so it must submit to steel:
 New life is born of travail and of pain,
 And human freedom dies to live again:
 The actual cautery of this war may teach
 What lawyers could not prove nor churches preach,
 That, when our deeds are balanced 'gainst our word,
 The problem's solved by something quite absurd.

We've tried this formula of cold and hot:

- "All men are free and equal—and are not;
- "God made of one blood all men—but, you see,
- "He gave black blood to Sambo, blue to me;
- "All men we hold—too plain a fact to show—
- "Born free and equal—that is, if 'tis so;
- "All men the scriptures prove are near of kin—
- "That is, all men who have a common skin;
- "Freedom's the birth-right of all men that be,
- "Provided men can manage to be free.
- "The law's repealed against a pair of stools—
- "Four millions of exceptions prove all rules.
- "Extremes must meet, and thus you clearly see
- "Freedom is Slavery, and slaves are free;
- "So, the same thing by different name we call—
- "A fact well known to Jefferson and Paul!"

Such speech too long has cheated—worse than this,
 We twisted human wretchedness to bliss;
 Gave Bondage all that Liberty can please,

Arcadian raptures and a pastoral ease.
 Exempt from all that willing labor bears,
 Uneasy foresight, economic cares,
 The days flew by, insured the daily bread;
 The hand that flogged was still the hand that fed;
 Their wages heavy and their labor light;
 Blacks lounged all day and fiddled through the night;
 Lapt in completest ease, their sweet career
 Ne'er raised a sigh, and never forced a tear;
 Reversed all fusty rules and notions old—
 The age for us was brass, for them was gold.
 Nor was this all: these chattels, void of sin,
 Lived in a faith that freemen could not win,
 And snatched, without the old alchymic pains,
 A golden pleasure out of iron chains—
 Feeling, in spite of many an ugly gash,
 A plerophoric rapture 'neath the lash.
 'Twas Abraham's fingers fixed the welded bands;
 'Twas Moses heated and applied the brands;
 'Twas Isaac paddled up the blistering chine;
 'Twas Jacob that applied the cooling brine.
 These things, which forced sometimes the guilty shriek,
 Were dispensations from Mount Sinai's peak.
 We wrote in blood—for blood full often flowed—
 These needed margents of the Hebrew code:
 But Sambo, smiling, owned imputed taints;
 He suffered surely—suffered so the saints,
 Without the compensation that arose
 From holy hands inflicting sacred blows!
 Ah! what a field for strengthening in the strife
 A love of Heaven and scorn of lower life!
 Ah! what a privilege to so endure

A bitter pang that death alone could cure!
 The sable stoic, with perpetual grin
 Breasted the storm, and marched through thick and thin,
 While all was dark without, and all was light within!
 These were the tales they told us; we believed;
 Most acquiesced, though here and there one grieved,
 And for his pains the satisfaction had
 Of being stamped as traitorous or mad.
 He who could feel a brother's countless pains
 Was plotting treason or was firing fanes:
 He patriot only who in rose-light saw
 Whips, dungeons, fetters, tar-pots and lynch-law!
 Thank Heaven, that day of dark delusion past,
 We think with pity—boldly speak at last;
 That no more now, with diabolic skill,
 The foul enchantress moulds us at her will;
 That sin no more, in quest of useful tools,
 Turns hearts to stone, and wise men into fools.
 We see it now: each thronging hope or fear
 Has purged our eyes, and lo! what shames appear!
 We ask with wonder why the satirist's flail
 So long has slept, while wrongs like these prevail:
 The savage hand that smote the unguarded weak,
 Snatching Heaven's power its petty wrath to wreak;
 The code, that by one sweeping, searing ban,
 Crushed manhood out by systematic plan;
 The fears that aye with meddlesome control
 Trod out the slumbering fires of each poor soul—
 Watched every heart with such unwinking care
 Lest some poor spark of love should linger there;
 The greedy avarice that, sharp and strong,
 Held back the wage of labor hard and long;

The lust that, hardly half-true to itself,
 Polluted women for the sake of pelf;
 The stolid selfishness that tore apart
 Hands that God joined, and loving heart from heart;
 And, trained all foolish feeling to despise,
 Heard but with scorn the infant's natural cries—
 Just for a moment in this world caressed,
 Then rapt forever from its mother's breast.
 We see it now—the schoolman's day is o'er.
 We feel it now, that never felt before.
 Some may be agitators, and some knaves;
 He may be canting while the other raves;
 And this unsex itself, or man or dame,
 For notoriety, which they call fame;
 One single diamond 'neath a sea of mud—
 One single truth upon a shoreless flood
 Of nonsense floating! Yet 'tis only fair
 We should admit that what is there is there;
 And claim, for honor of our common kind,
 That none always are deaf—completely blind.
 If cold dull men, content to labor still
 In one unceasing logic-grinding mill,
 Worship the head while they ignore the heart,
 They serve a purpose though they act a part;
 And though we're skeptical, or though we're sound,
 Upon that topic, still the world goes 'round,
 And as it goes must be content to hear
 Prophetic voices, though not over clear—
 The passionate oracles of men who see
 Too well to let their speech coherent be—
 Of men remembered through all coming years,
 Spite of their failures, with regretful tears:

Men who but make it better understood
 That human error mingles yet with good—
 Men still of dignity in their disgrace,
 The just exponents of a fallen race.
 What though this pastor fired, not fed, his fold,
 And poor Sybilla mannish grew and bold—
 Seeking a height that sanity can't reach
 In freaks of costume or in frisks of speech?
 What though, sometimes in love, sometimes in wrath,
 They left for devious ways the beaten path?
 What though sometimes, the public ear to win,
 They used a language to abuse akin?
 What though, of no conventional shame afraid,
 They tried to startle who could not persuade?
 Am I so wise that I must look with scorn
 On human zeal, of human kindness born?
 Am I so pure that I can well disdain
 Truth trod to dust in weary throes of pain?
 Is faith so loved on earth, that earth now needs
 No words that blister and no breast that bleeds?
 All western winds—the sun-shine calm and sweet—
 The path of progress primrose-d to our feet!
 Life but one round of rosy-fingered hours—
 Perpetual arbors sweet with constant flowers,
 That woo our slumbers with their odorous breath—
 The dreams of Islam without Islam's death!
 Not so, I think, have Saxon legends told
 Of earth subdued in iron days of old.
 They'd some dull notion that bliss follows blows,
 And only after labor comes repose;
 That he who'd taste man's possible delight
 Must win his title in the heady fight;

That not one joy worth having, dear and deep,
 Comes to a nation in its calmest sleep.
 If, then, this maxim rules creation's plan
 That what is hard is horrible to man—
 That what is difficult is dreadful—then
 Thrice happy worms, and thrice unhappy men!
 Then every mocker who has made mankind
 His sport and shame, was wide-awake—we blind!
 Then we begin to see the dreadful drift
 Of laughing Rabelais and of sneering Swift;
 Then we begin to see that all our tribe
 Deserved at least the Gulliverian jibe—
 The muddy mockery at earth's children cast,
 Dwarfs, monsters, beasts—pedantic fools at last;
 The drivelling sots whom accident has made
 To eat and drink and sleep—perhaps to trade;
 Then all our work so boasted of but seems
 Far less substantial than our lightest dreams;
 They only wise who sought in cloistral night
 Surcease of struggling in a fatuous fight!
 Not by such fears, my land! thy fortunes rose.
 No dullest dreamings waited on thy throes!
 Thy men, who dared the battle, dared to think,
 Nor deigned from any ripe result to shrink.
 When Naseby saw a tyrant's legions fly
 When Whitehall saw that tyrant justly die—
 When our great Milton, in defence of right,
 Gave up, with no regretful sighs, his sight—
 Ah! who such offering can well despise?
 The world so fair to his poetic eyes—
 When, Cromwell, emulous of truth alone,
 Scoffed at man's law, and took from God a throne;

When that frail ship, with such a freight, came o'er
 The ungentle sea to this ungentle shore;
 When, famine stalking o'er the blighted field,
 They lived to die, but did not live to yield;
 When came those later days of struggle stout—
 Days that our fathers' history rounded out
 Through all these annals, (and what race can tell
 Of so much done, and so much done so well?)
 We read with blinded and unworthy sight
 Who find not there that God will guide the right.
 War has its chances—and a bad chance must
 Sometimes lead feeble men to false distrust.
 One battle lost, the craven may despair:
 The knightly soul reads victory's portents there.
 A righteous cause its champions never yields;
 It keeps its laurels though it lose its fields;
 And though its men-at-arms five times may fly,
 Eternal justice was not born to die.
 Truth is a sun, and though the envious cloud
 May for a day its radiance enshroud,
 He's but a doting doubter who'd declare
 Only the cloud, and not the sun is there!
 We need this faith in error's final doom—
 Need it alike in boisterous glee or gloom—
 Need it when victory purples all the press,
 And need it still when different tales depress;
 Need it alike in failure and success.
 I've seen a man—and so, may be, have you—
 Smitten with grief and choking with ado,
 Who, having read of danger over nigh,
 Gave up the contest and began to cry.
 But yesterday to Heaven exultant tost,

He croaks to-day that all's forever lost;
 With piteous whine declares our well-tried braves
 Are simply cowards, and our statesmen knaves;
 Admits, poor man, with self-denying groan,
 Our foe's the glory, and the shame our own;
 And, really, speaking as the country's friend,
 Thinks we should yield, and so the contest end!—
 Mourns that such quantities of blood should flow—
 And, if they will not stay—why, let them go!
 He'll something save—this strangely prudent man!
 His fortune first, the country, if we can!
 No matter what with coming peace befall—
 The war's well over when its o'er at all!
 Ground arms at once! we may be happy yet
 With Slavery tempered by enormous debt.
 Accept these chattels as unpleasant facts!
 Coerce these rebels by our generous acts!
 While they, admitted possible the slave,
 May give us back a part of what we gave,
 And all the nation lapse to primal bliss,
 Or something better than a war like this.

O gentle logic! O pathetic wail!
 O sweet confusion of the head and tail!
 O pleasing faith in what has failed before!
 O velvet compromise, proposed once more!
 He boasts no prophet skill, nor ponderous brain,
 Who sees and shows that you would fail again—
 Perhaps no prescience wond'rously wide-eyed
 To see and show you'll not again be tried.
 War has its vices, but it is not one
 That wars, for causes certain, backward run.

Freedom has follies, but 'twere hard if she
 Gave up her freedom that she might be free;
 Nor would it seem the wisest course to break
 All rules of right for justice's sweet sake—
 Although our weeping friends, in times like these,
 Aye stand prepared to show that chalk is cheese:
 Which I, for one, admit not, though I go
 To axe or halter for not thinking so.
 Then trust we yet the faith our fathers gave,
 Though courts may sneer and cabinets may rave.
 Trust we, while crafty interest once more tries
 The drear diplomacy of lackered lies,
 And seeks to waken in this hour of woe
 Quarrels men thought allayed so long ago.
 I blame not England! I too long have known
 She held no other interest than her own;
 I knew her custom was to proudly speak
 Sweet words sometimes; but kindness to the weak
 I never found, howe'er her love might roam,
 Preferred by her to what begins at home.
 I knew, although her orators might bawl
 Fierce tirades 'gainst the South in Exeter Hall,
 That Exeter Hall, perplexed by Hobson's choice,
 Is sometimes deaf and sometimes loses voice.
 I knew, whatever brilliant alms they give,
 The men of Manchester must spin to live;
 I knew how seldom traders, east or west,
 Stand fast by truth when profit is the test;
 I knew 'twere hard to find one constant friend
 'Twixt Dukes who borrow—Democrats who lend;
 I knew that gold would make our Bashan dumb.
 And, knowing this, expected what has come!

And say but here, in non-committal verse,
 It might be better, and it might be worse.
 The hand that smote the shivering Indies down
 To add new jewels to a burthened crown;
 The iron hand that all the world has felt,
 From barbarous black man to enlightened Celt;
 Still used to crush the unresisting kern,
 Has found a velvet touch the last to learn.
 And yet as softened manners might not show
 A softer heart their complaisance below.
 We'll take our English cousin as we find
 The wond'rous man—half gentleman, half hind!
 As now the gold, and now the brass we see,
 Confess our wonder such a beast can be;
 And, laughing, own, good-naturedly, at last
 Our comprehension thoroughly surpassed;
 Own that our morals get unusual shocks
 When morals mix with fluctuating stocks;
 Own that, when well observed, at last we find
 A specie balance awful to the mind;
 Own that ten million yards of cotton cloth
 Cut down to five, should make the spinner wroth;
 So, shaking hands and giving up our rounds,
 We count our dollars—and John counts his pounds;
 Thrice happy both—if truce like that were o'er—
 Or pounds or dollars made one virtue more.
 I think 'twere manlier if our nerves were less
 Inclined to this gratuitous distress,—
 Self-poised, in spite of steamboats and of mails,
 Of foreign praises, or of foreign wails.
 He is a character but dwarfed and dim
 Who says too much of what men say of him.

The elder Roman bore himself the same,
 His shoulder high, whatever tidings came :
 Still high in latter days their port was borne,
 Though Vandals plucked Patrician beards in scorn.
 And thus, my country ! dignified through all,
 Whatever wreck, whatever ruin fall,
 Keep thou thy center, though thou may'st not move—
 Like great men troubled, such as gods approve.
 O trust, my shaken land ! in all to find
 Thy peace in virtue and the solid mind ;
 Unmoved by desperate fortune, and untost
 By factious strife, though battles may be lost.
 He who can brave the worst, is strong to meet
 The leaden leaders of some London sheet—
 The purchased wrath of hack and garreteer,
 Who works at once on ignorance and beer—
 The long drawn libels, sharp and superfine,
 Writ for a dinner, paid for by the line.
 I read them calmly, and I frankly own
 England has men of better stuff and tone.
 One honest voice, like thine, O honest Bright !
 Is worth far more for reason and for right
 Than all this doubtful truck-work that reveals
 A coward placeman trembling for his seals.
 Who fears appeal, when all this slime is cast,
 From England present unto England past ?
 When, both our fortunes blended into one,
 Our common histories in one current run ?
 True sons of England, we'll forget this hour,
 When figures false to facts alone have power,
 For days to man of higher hope and health—
 Of Magna Charta and the Commonwealth !

Turn back our theme! I know not, as I write,
 The future, hidden well from human sight.
 I only know that, by eternal laws,
 There is no failure for a righteous cause!
 And knowing this, by reason's eye is seen
 A state self-centered—vital, yet serene.
 A state that gives to all an equal share
 Of all her blessings, and her common care;
 From whose broad bosom, with an equal flow,
 Draw sustenance alike the high and low;
 Whose gentle hand to all alike imparts
 Whate'er she gains of learning and of arts;
 Who, leaving all to learn or all to teach,
 Respects opinion and a liberal speech;
 And, free from every taint of courts or kings,
 Disdains to call her happy children things!
 And though with enterprise of sharpest ken
 She buy and sell, will buy and sell not men.
 On those wide plains, now lone beneath the skies,
 Her tribes extend, and new-born cities rise;
 Our Saxon speech is heard from shore to shore;
 Our Saxon homes with happiness run o'er;
 Our simple laws, calm, temperate and plain,
 Invite once more the migratory train,
 From want and hard oppression o'er the sea,
 To rest them in this Canaan of the free!

Is this a dream? Ye generous minds, that here
 Have something learned of human hope and fear!
 Have something of a nobler nature caught,
 From all that high philosophy has taught,
 Say, while the light of youth is resting now

In morning freshness on each unbent brow ;
 Say, while this gladsome summer time imparts
 Its ripening beauties to unhackneyed hearts,
 Is this a dream? Your answer, loud and clear,
 In sounding action breaks upon mine ear ;
 And each replies : " This head, this heart, this hand —
 " Take all I have, my suffering, struggling land !
 " But leave me still the right untouched to claim
 " Myself a part of thine unsullied fame !
 " O leave me, spite of all this gathering gloom,
 " Heroic life or unpolluted tomb ! "



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